Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HALIFA 00508 111838Z
ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1861
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT CA
SUBJECT: JOEY'S HEIRS: NEWFOUNDLAND LIBERAL LEADERSHIP
RACE

1. NFLD LIBERALS WILL MEET THIS COMING WEEKEND TO VOTE ON THEIR PARTY'S LEADERSHIP IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY. ED ROBERTS, WHO DEPOSED JOEY SMALLWOOD AS THE NFLD LIBERAL LEADER BACK IN THE EARLY '70'S, IS BELIEVED BY MANY TO HAVE PROVIDED A RATHER UNASSERTIVE AND COLORLESS LEADERSHIP WHICH IS UNLIKELY TO HAVE MUCH CHANCE OF REGAINING FOR THE LIBERALS IN NFLD THEIR FORMER POSITION AS THE PARTY OF THE MAJORITY.

2. OPPOSING ED ROBERTS ARE MHA'S STEVE NEARY, ROGER SIMMONS, AND BILL ROWE AS WELL AS BUSINESSMAN HUGH SHEA. NEARY IS SEEN AS ROBERT'S CHIEF OPPONENT AND IS GIVEN A GOOD CHANCE OF WINNING THE LEADERSHIP IF SIMMONS, ROWE, AND SHEA DROP OUT AFTER EARLY BALLOTING AND HE IS ABLE TO CAPTURE THE VOTES OF A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF THEIR ADHERENTS.

3. EXTAFF MINISTER JAMIESON AND FORMER PREMIER
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SMALLWOOD ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND THE LEADERSHIP CONVENTION BUT ARE NOT EXPECTED TO FAVOR PUBLICLY ANY OF THE CANDIDATES.

4. COMMENT: NEARY IS A FREEWHEELING POPULIST WHOSE LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS AS A POSSIBLE PROVINCIAL OPPOSITION LEADER IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS. ON THE ONE

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HAND HE MIGHT BRING BACK TO THE LIBERALS THOSE SWITCH VOTERS WHO HAVE BEEN TURNED OFF BY GOOD, GREY ED ROBERTS' LOW KEY STYLE, BUT ON THE OTHER HE WOULD BE SURE TO SCARE OFF THOSE VOTERS AND CONTRIBUTORS TO THE PARTY COFFERS WHO SEE HIM AS A CRACKPOT AND A DEMAGOGUE. WITH UNEMPLOYMENT SETTING NEW POSTWAR RECORDS IN NFLD, NEARY IS TRYING TO MAKE POLITICAL CAPITAL BY COMPARING HIS HUMBLE ORIGINS AND HIS RECORD OF ADVOCACY FOR THE "LITTLE MAN" WITH AN IMAGE OF ROBERTS AS ONE COMING FROM A PRIVILEGED BACKGROUND WHO IS TOTALLY UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS OF THE POOR.

5. THE SHOOT-FROM-THE-HIP REPUTATION OF NEARY WILL APPEAL TO THOSE NFLD LIBERALS WHO REMEMBER WHEN OLD JOEY SMALLWOOD MADE CONFEDERATION BUILDING IN ST. JOHN'S HIS OWN PRIVATE O.K. CORRAL. AS A FORMER MINISTER IN SMALLWOOD'S CABINET, NEARY MUST REMEMBER WITH NOSTALGIA THOSE FREE-SPENDING DAYS WHEN THE TORRENT OF DOLLARS FROM OTTAWA SEEMED NEVER-ENDING, AND WHEN CARPETBAGGING PROMOTERS WEAVED SPELLBINDING VISIONS OF CANADA'S 10TH PROVINCE AS THE NEW JERUSALEM. BUT THE DOLLARS HAVE SLOWED DOWN AND THE VISIONS HAVE FADED, AND MOST NFLD POLITICIANS HAVE LEARNED TO BE A BIT MORE CHARY THAN STEVE NEARY WHEN MAKING PROMISES AND PREDICITONS. MANY OF THE MORE REFLECTIVE NEWFOUNDLANDERS, WITH
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THE HIGHEST TAXES AND THE HIGHEST PER-CAPITA PROVINCIAL DEBT IN CANADA, WILL BE A LONG TIME FORGETTING THE LEGACY OF JOEY. AND SO EVEN IF STEVE NEARY WINS HIS BATTLE THIS COMING WEEKEND, IT MAY TURN OUT THAT THE LIBERAL PARTY IN NFLD HAS LOST THE WAR. END COMMENT.

6. DRAFTER: JHMOORE

MOORE

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